

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A system comprising:

2 a. means, coupled to a network, for maintaining participant information comprising
3 an identifier of a first participant;

4 b. means, coupled to the network, for scheduling a conference, the conference
5 being scheduled with the identifier of the first participant;

6 c. a first site comprising a first means for coordinating a conference coupled to the
7 network; and a plurality of first means for participating in a conference coupled to the network; and

8 d. a second site comprising a second means for coordinating a conference coupled
9 to the network; and a plurality of second means for participating in a conference coupled to the
10 network; wherein:

11 e. the first means for coordinating provides a first notice of a conference; notice
12 being provided for assuring participation by the first participant at a particular first means for
13 participating identified in the first notice; and

14 f. the second means for coordinating provides a second notice of the conference for
15 assuring participation by a second participant at a particular second means for participating
16 identified in the second notice.

1 2. The system of claim 1 wherein:

2 a. the means for maintaining participant information further comprises an identifier
3 of the second participant;

4 b. the means for scheduling schedules the conference with the identifier of the
5 second participant; and

6 c. the second notice comprises the identifier of the second participant.

1 3. The system of claim 1 wherein the means for maintaining participant information
2 comprises a jail management system and the identifier of the first participant identifies a prisoner
3 of the jail.

1 4. The system of claim 3 wherein the second identifier identifies a visitor.

1 5. A system comprising:

2 a. means for communicating as a network;

3 b. a plurality of means for participating in a conference coupled to the means for
4 communicating, the plurality arranged with at least one site having a multiplicity of particular
5 means for participating of the plurality; and

6 c. means for coordinating a conference coupled to the means for communicating
7 and located at the site, wherein the means for coordinating provides notice to a participant for
8 directing the participant to a particular means for participating.

1 6. A system comprising:

2 a. means for communicating as a network;

3 b. means for operating a database comprising participant location information; the
4 means for operating coupled to the means for communicating; and

5 c. a plurality of sites, each site comprising:

6 (1) a respective multiplicity of first means, coupled to the means for
7 communicating, for participating in a conference; and

8 (2) a respective second means for coordinating a conference, the second
9 means physically distinct from the first means, the second means coupled to the means for
10 communicating; wherein

11 d. notice is provided to a participant to attend a conference, notice being provided
12 by a particular means for coordinating of a particular site determined in accordance with the
13 database to be nearest the participant at a time prior to the conference.

1 7. The system of claim 6 wherein the means for coordinating is operated by a person to
2 provide the notice, operation being without action by the participant.

1 8. The system of claim 6 wherein the means for coordinating is operated by a coordinator.

1 9. A system for conducting a conference, the system comprising:

2 a. means for communicating as a network; and

3 b. a plurality of means for coupling, each means being for coupling a respective
4 plurality of participant stations to the means for communicating; wherein each means for coupling
5 comprises:

6 (1) means for storing respective indicia of the conference, wherein indicia
7 of the conference comprise a start time and identification of participant stations of the respective
8 plurality for the conference; and

9 (2) means for initiating communication to conduct the conference,
10 communication being with the identified participant station; initiating being aborted if a signal is
11 not received by the means for initiating from the identified participant station within a period after
12 the start time.

1 10. The system of claim 9 wherein the participant station comprises means for detecting
2 beginning use of the station by a participant; and the signal is provided by the means for detecting
3 when use by a participant is detected.

1 11. The system of claim 9 wherein:

2 a. the participant station comprises means for detecting beginning use of the station
3 by a participant;

4 b. the indicia of the conference further includes identification of a participant; and

5 c. the signal is provided by the means for detecting when use is begun by the
6 participant identified to the station in accordance with the indicia of the conference.

1 12. The system of claim 9 wherein the participant station comprises a handset and a hook
2 switch; and the signal is provided in accordance with operation of the hook switch.

1 13. A database for at least one of planning, conducting, and recording a conference, the
2 database comprising:

3 a. means for associating a conference identifier, a participant identifier, and indicia
4 of a physical location where the participant is expected for participation in the conference
5 corresponding to the conference identifier; and

6 b. means for accessing the association to accomplish at least one of planning,
7 conducting, and recording the conference.

1 14. The database of claim 13 wherein the participant is at least one of an inmate, a visitor
2 of the inmate, and a judge.

1 15. The database of claim 14 wherein the database further comprises:

2 a. second means for associating the identifier of the participant, an identifier of a
3 visitor, and indicia of a relationship of the participant and the visitor; wherein

4 b. the indicia of relationship describes at least one of a familial, employment,
5 representation, religious, and social relations.

1 16. A database for at least one of planning, conducting, and recording a conference, the
2 database comprising:

3 a. means for associating a conference identifier, an equipment identifier, and indicia
4 of a physical location where the equipment is expected for participation in the conference
5 corresponding to the conference identifier; and

6 b. means for accessing the association to accomplish at least one of planning,
7 conducting, and recording the conference.

1 17. A method for conducting a conference via a system having a plurality of sites, each site
2 including a multiplicity of participant stations and a control station, the system further comprising a
3 database for maintaining a tuple including a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant, and
4 an identifier of a participant station, the method comprising:

5 a step for obtaining a notice at the control station of a site, the notice comprising the
6 conference identifier, the identifier of a participant, and the identifier of a participant station; and

7 a step for directing a participant to a participant station in accordance with the notice,
8 the participant corresponding to the identifier of the participant, the participant station
9 corresponding to the identifier of the participant station.

1 18. The method of claim 17 wherein the participant performs the step for obtaining at a self
2 service station coupled to the network, the self service station comprising the control station.

1 19. The method of claim 17 wherein a conference coordinator performs the step for
2 directing.

1 20. The method of claim 19 wherein the notice in the step for obtaining comprises notice
2 for a plurality of participants to be advised by the conference coordinator.

1 21. The method of claim 17 wherein the notice in the step for obtaining comprises notice
2 for a plurality of scheduled conferences involving the participant.

1 22. A method for conducting a conference via a system having a multiplicity of participant
2 stations and a control station, the system further comprising a database for maintaining a tuple
3 including a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant station, and an identifier of a
4 participant, the method comprising:

5 a step for detecting the unavailability of a first participant station of the multiplicity;

6 a step for detecting the availability of an alternate participant station of the
7 multiplicity;

8 a step for obtaining confirmation that the alternate participant station is to be used in
9 the conference corresponding to the conference identifier;

10 a step for revising the tuple to exclude the first participant station and to include an
11 identifier of the alternate participant station to reschedule the conference;

12 a step for obtaining at the control station a notice that the conference associated with
13 the conference identifier is to commence, the notice in accordance with the revised tuple; and

14 a step for directing a participant corresponding to the identifier of the participant to
15 the alternate participant station in accordance with the notice.

1 23. The method of claim 22 wherein the step for detecting unavailability comprises at least
2 one of:

3 a step for comparing a signal from a microphone to a first threshold to determine
4 unavailability;

5 a step for analyzing a signal to noise ratio of a signal from a microphone to
6 determine unavailability;

7 a step for comparing a signal from a camera to a second threshold to determine
8 unavailability; and

9 a step for analyzing a signal to noise ratio of a signal from a camera to determine
10 unavailability.

1 24. The method of claim 24 wherein the step for detecting availability comprises:

2 a step for assuring that the notice will be timely as provided in accordance with at
3 least one of a transit time and a notification time associated with at least one of the identifier of the
4 participant and the identifier of the alternate participant station.

5 25. The method of claim 24 wherein the step for detecting unavailability comprises:

6 a step for detecting at least one of the unavailability of the participant associated
7 with the identifier of the participant and the unavailability of the first participant station in response
8 to detecting a change in value of at least one of a transit time and a notification time associated
9 with at least one of the identifier of the participant and the identifier of the first participant station.

1 26. A method for conducting a conference via a system having a multiplicity of participant
2 stations and a control station, the system further comprising a database for maintaining a first tuple
3 and a second tuple, the first tuple relating a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant
4 station, and an identifier of a participant, the second tuple relating the identifier of the participant
5 and a location of the participant, the method comprising:

6 a step for detecting a revision of the second tuple; and

7 a step for rescheduling the conference in accordance with the revised second tuple.

1 27. The method of claim 26 wherein the step for rescheduling comprises a step for
2 canceling the conference corresponding to the conference identifier of the first tuple.

1 28. A method for conducting a conference via a system, the system including a multiplicity
2 of participants and a database for maintaining a tuple of a conference identifier and an identifier of
3 a first participant, the method comprising:

4 a step for detecting the unavailability of a participant corresponding to the identifier
5 of the first participant;

6 a step for detecting the availability of an alternate participant; and

7 a step for revising the tuple to exclude the identifier of the first participant and to
8 include an identifier of the alternate participant, to reschedule the conference.

1 29. The method of claim 28 wherein the first participant is at least one of a human
2 participant, an equipment participant, a data participant, and a recorder channel.

1 30. A method for scheduling a conference in accordance with a request, the request
2 comprising indicia of a plurality of participants and a start time, the method comprising:

3 a step for maintaining for each participant of the plurality a respective first list of
4 future times;

5 a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective sublist of the
6 first list including times after the start time;

7 a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list of
8 unavailable times;

9 a step for intersecting for each participant of the plurality the respective first list
10 and the respective second list to form a respective availability list;

11 a step for intersecting all participant availability lists to form an opportunity list;

12 and

13 a step for scheduling the conference in accordance with a selected item of the
14 opportunity list.

1 31. The method of claim 30 wherein:

2 a. the step for scheduling comprises a step for posting to a database a record
3 comprising a conference start time; and

4 b. the step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list
5 of unavailable times comprises a step for obtaining a query result from the database.

1 32. The method of claim 30 wherein the step for forming a respective second list comprises
2 a step for assuring that times associated with lower ranking conferences are not excluded from the
3 second list.

1 33. The method of claim 30 for scheduling a first conference further comprising a step for
2 rescheduling a second conference after scheduling the first conference, the second conference
3 being rescheduled to eliminate a conflict with the first conference.

1 34. The method of claim 33 wherein scheduling of the first conference is conditional on
2 acceptance of a score based on at least one of:

3 a. a count of the total number of conferences that would have conflicts with at least
4 one of the schedule of the first conference and the schedule of any rescheduled conference;

5 b. a count of the total number of at least one of coordinators and participants
6 associated with the first conference and any rescheduled conference; and

7 c. a transit time associated with at least one of a participant of the first conference
8 and a participant of any rescheduled conference.

1 35. A method for scheduling a conference among stations of a plurality in accordance with
2 a first request formed at a first station of the plurality, the first request comprising indicia of a
3 plurality of participants and a start time, the method comprising:

4 a step for maintaining for each participant of the plurality a respective first list of
5 future times;

6 a step for sending a second request to a second station of the plurality, the second
7 request comprising indicia of at least one particular participant of the plurality of participants and
8 the start time;

9 a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective sublist of the
10 first list including times after the start time;

11 a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list of
12 unavailable times;
13 a step for intersecting for each participant of the plurality the respective first list
14 and the respective second list to form a respective availability list;
15 a step for receiving a response to the second request, the response comprising an
16 availability list of the particular participant;
17 a step for intersecting all participant availability lists including the availability list
18 of the particular participant to form an opportunity list;
19 a step for forming a proposed schedule of the conference in accordance with a
20 selected item of the opportunity list;
21 a step for providing a notice to the second station in accordance with the proposed
22 schedule; and
23 a step for scheduling the conference in accordance with a response to the notice.

1 36. A method for conducting a video conference by a system, the system including a
2 database and at least two conference participant stations, each station comprising means for
3 inputting audio and means for detecting use by the participant of the means for inputting audio, the
4 method comprising:

5 a step for recalling from the database a start time for a conference;
6 a step for detecting use of the respective means for inputting audio of each station;
7 and
8 a step for coupling the conference participant stations for the video conference in
9 accordance with whether use was detected at each station within a respective predetermined time
10 that includes the start time.

1 37. The method of claim 36 wherein the method further comprises:
2 a step for presenting a notice at each station that the station has been scheduled
3 for the conference; and
4 a step for presenting at each station an instruction for a participant to begin using
5 the means for inputting audio.

1 38. The method of claim 36 wherein the method further comprises a step for revising the
2 start time in accordance with failing to detect use of the respective means for inputting audio of
3 each station within the respective predetermined time.

1 39. The method of claim 36 wherein:
2 a. the database is stored in part at each station; and
3 b. the step for recalling is accomplished at each station with reference to a
4 respective part of the database.

1 40. A method for conducting a video conference by a system, the system including a
2 database and at least two conference participant stations, each station comprising means for
3 inputting audio and means for detecting use by the participant of the means for inputting audio, the
4 method comprising:
5 a step for determining an end time of a conference in accordance with the
6 database;
7 a step for displaying at each station a remaining duration of the conference; and
8 a step for decoupling the conference participant stations to discontinue video
9 conferencing in accordance with the end time.

1 41. The method of claim 40 wherein the step for displaying a remaining duration displays a
2 continuously updated remaining duration.

1 42. The method of claim 40 wherein:
2 a. the database is stored in part at each station; and
3 b. the step for determining an end time is accomplished at each station with
4 reference to a respective part of the database.

1 43. The method of claim 40 further comprising:
2 a step for presenting at each station an instruction for a participant to cease using
3 the means for inputting audio; and

- 4 a step for presenting at each station an instruction for the participant to leave the
- 5 station.

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